David's Five-stringed Harp

(No. 2527)

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"I said unto the LORRD, You are my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence." Psalm 140: 6,7,12,13.

This Psalm was written by David when he was sorely vexed by many adversaries. These adversaries were bent upon his destruction—they could not bear that the son of Jesse should be favored of God and that he should come to the throne—so they set their wits to work to invent all manner of slanders against him. They misconstrued his actions, they misrepresented his motives. They spat the very venom of asps from their mouths against him and, at the same time, they said to one another, "If we can lead him to do wrong. If we can, somehow or other, entrap him, either in his speech, or in his private character, or in his public actions, then we shall have a weapon wherewith we can smite him." The ungodly are fully aware that slander is, after all, a very dangerous weapon to handle and, like the Australian boomerang, it is very apt to come back to the man who throws it. Stones, hurled into the air, often fall upon the head of the thrower, and slander often recoils upon those who utter it. So, if they can but get a trthflaccusation against a man of God, then they are exceedingly glad. Slander is like shooting at a man with only powder, or with very small shot that can sting, but cannot kill. But, oh, if they can discover some questionable action of the man, or some decided wrongdoing, then they can load their rifles with bullets and have something deadly to fire at the righteous!

David was exceedingly troubled by all this malice on the part of his enemies. He was a man who would have liked to go through the world at peace with everybody. Even when Saul tried to hunt him to the death, you remember that he would not lift his hand against his adversary even when he might have slain him. When, at night, he stood looking at his sleeping foe, and Abishai said to him, "God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." David answered, "Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?" And when David and his men were in the sides of the great cave at Engedi, Saul came in to sleep awhile and he was, again, in David's power, but David did not touch him, save only that he cut off a piece

of the skirt of the king's robe that he might show him, afterwards, how completely he was in his servant's hands. It is peculiarly trying to a man who is thus patient and long-suffering to be incessantly compassed about with false accusations and manifold temptations. David said of his adversaries, "They compassed me about; they compassed me about like bees," stinging him here, and stinging him there, and stinging him wherever they could!

I want you to notice how this man of God acted in this trying time. He betook himself to his knees—he began to pray, "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man." And again, in the next Psalm, he said, "Lord, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You." He found his remedy for all the stings of falsehood in drawing near to the living God! He was a wise man, thus, to bathe his wounds in that bath which alone could take the venom out of them, by a prayerfully drawing near to the Most High. And he mingled great faith with his prayer. When trying to expound this Psalm, I was much struck with the positive way in which David speaks all through it. Notice that sixth verse—"I said unto the Lord, You are my God." That is a grand way to talk! And then, further on, in the 12th verse—"I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted." He has no question about the matter, no hesitation. He does not say, "I hope He will," but, "I know He will, I am confident of it." And that makes him say, in the last verse, "Surely"—he felt so certain about it that he could say, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name."

It is a blessed thing when faith rises as tribulations increase. A little faith may do for a skirmish with the enemy, but you need the full assurance of faith for a pitched battle. When the waters are up to the ankles, a little faith may enable you to stand. But when you get to "waters to swim in," then you need, in childlike confidence, to cast yourself entirely upon the stream of Divine Love, or else, assuredly, you will sink. May God be pleased to increase the faith of all of us who believe in Jesus! If we are tempted and tried very sorely, may the Great High Priest, whom we cannot see, but who always sees us and foresees every danger to which we are exposed, pray for us till He can say to each one of us, as He did to Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." For, if faith keeps her proper place and prayer does her duty, there will be a way for the child of God to escape from every trial.

There are five things in my text to which I especially want to draw the attention of any who are in sore trouble—and particularly those who are in trouble from enemies who are seeking to ruin them. That which occupied and satisfied David's mind may wisely occupy and satisfy ours when we are in a similar condition to his. Flowers from which this bee has sucked some honey are the kind of flowers for us to light upon, with the expectation that in them we shall find honey, too! The first thing I see here is, possession asserted. ' 'I said unto the Lord, You are my God." The second is, a petition presented. "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." The third is, preservation experienced. "O God the Lord, the strength

of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle." The fourth is, protection expected. "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." The last is, praise predicted.' 'Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence." I can only speak very briefly upon each head.

I. The first is very precious. I pray that every child of God may realize and experience it. It is POSSESSION ASSERTED. "I said unto the Lord, You are my God."

What was the possession? It was the Lord Himself! "I said unto the LORD, You are my God." The word, "LORD," here, means Jehovah. You see that it is in capital letters and wherever our translators print the word, "LORD" thus, they mean Jehovah. "I said unto Jehovah, the only living and true God, You are my God." This is a wonderful speech for David to make—"'You are my God,' in opposition to the gods of the heathen. They may worship Baal and Ashtaroth, but, 'You are my God.' I count other gods to be idols, the works of men's hands, and I despise them. All other confidences, all other grounds of trust are to me but as broken cisterns that can hold no water. 'I said unto Jehovah, the only living God, You are my God,' in opposition to every other who is called God."

"'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.' I have taken You unto myself as much as if no other man ever trusted You. I feel that I could stand alone and acknowledge You to be the God of the whole earth. I said to my heart, 'All that God is, is henceforth mine.' He has given Himself to me in the Covenant wherein He said, 'I will be their God.' And He is as much mine as if He belonged to nobody else. Yes, as fully, as completely and as entirely mine, if I am a Believer in Him, as if I were His only child, His only chosen, His only redeemed one." Oh, but this is a wonderful thing, to put the lines of possession round the Infinite, to lay the grasp of faith upon the Incomprehensible, and to say, "Jehovah, You are my God"! Your possessions, dear Friends, are very large. "Why do you say that?" asks one—"my garments are wearing out and I am sure I do not know how I shall ever renew them. My cupboard is very bare and my wallet is empty." My dear Brother in Christ, you are a very rich man, after all, for all these treasures that may be eaten up with moth, or cankered and corrupted, what are they? But if God is your God, all things are yours, for all things are in God and the God who has given Himself to us cannot deny us anything! No, He has already, by that very act, given everything to us! So I pray that every child of God may know that he has this possession and be able to say without any hesitancy, "O Jehovah, You are my God."

Observe in the text, not only mention made of the possession, but of the claim to it "I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." David exhibited his title deeds. He did not say to himself, "That possession is mine, but I will leave it unrecognized and unclaimed," but he declared his right to it—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." Oh, if the children of God would sometimes be silent instead of speaking, they would be wise! But if, on the other hand, they would sometimes speak instead of remaining silent, they might be equally wise! Have you, dear Friend, ever said to the Lord, "You are my

God." Have you said it? "Well, I have hoped'it," says one. Oh, but I want you to get much beyond that, till, with full assurance, helped by the Holy Spirit, you can say, "It is so! My faith has grasped my God and I have dared to say it, say it at the Mercy Seat, say it when I stood at the foot of the Cross—and I expect to say it, before long, when I stand before Jehovah's Throne above, 'You are my God!' I put in my claim. I dare not do otherwise. I could not let You go without claiming You as my own. O Lord, You have been my dwelling place in all generations. I have said unto You, You are my God."

Notice also where this claim was made, in whose Presence, and who was the attesting Witnesst o it—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." It is a very easy thing to say to the minister, "The Lord is my God," or to say it to some Christian friend by way of profession. But it may not be true. It is a very solemn thing to be able to say toJehovah, "You are my God." True Believers have dialogs with their God! They are accustomed to speak with the Most High. They may say some good things to men, but they say their best things to God—"I said unto Jehovah, You are my God." Can you stand, at this moment, in the dreadful Presence of the Eternal? Can you realize to yourself that He sees and hears you, that He is all around you, that He is in you? Can you think of His infinite holiness and His inflexible justice and yet say to Him, "You are my God; You are a consuming fire, but You are my God"? Even our God, the God of those who believe, is a consuming fire, yet we call Him ours. It is a grand thing, in time of trouble, in time of slander, in time of temptation, if you can just turn your back on it all and say, "I look to God, and I say, 'O Jehovah, You are my God. I say it even in Your Presence.'" If you can truly say this, it will spread a delightful calm over your spirit! It will encase you as in an armor of proof! It will make your bleeding wounds to be stanched and your broken heart to rejoice, if you can say it!

And, once more, it seems to me to be a grand point in this text to note the occasion chosen by David to say, "You are my God." It was in the time of his trouble that he repeated to himself the fact that he had made this declaration. "'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.' Men said that I had a devil, but I said, 'You are my God.' They said I was a castaway, but I said, 'You are my God.' They said I was without a friend, but I said unto Jehovah, 'You are my God.' They said of me everything they could think of that was bad and they would have said worse things if they could have thought of them. And after they had done their worst and said all they could say, I said unto Jehovah, 'You are my God.'"

I cannot say that I care much for a conversation which consists all of, "he said and I said," and, "says he and says I," and so on. But for once it is good for a man to tell us what he said! Sometimes, in the court, a judge stops a witness and says, "I do not want to know what you said, and what the other man said! I want to know what you saw." But in this case, we do not wish to stop the good man. We wish him to go on and tell us more of what he said when he was in the very midst of his trouble. "'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God,' and my enemies may say what they like after that. Now, open your mouths, let your venom

come forth—you who are like adders and asps, sting as sharply as you may, you can do me no harm, for, 'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.'" That is the first thing I see in the text—possession asserted. II. The next thing I see is, A PETITION PRESENTED.

It ran in this fashion—"Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord," from which I gather that his prayers were frequent He puts the word in the plural. "Hear the voice of my supplications." He did not, in those days of trouble, pray once, and have done with praying, but he prayed again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again! When you have double trouble, take care that you have double prayer. When men speak worst against you, then speak most with your God. Multiply your supplications as God multiplies your tribulations. "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." Importunate prayers will prevail.

Next, I gather that David's prayers were full of meaning.' 'Hear the voice of my supplications." There are some people's prayers that are dumb prayers. They offer just so many words and yet there is no voice in them. It is a grand thing to have a voiceful prayer. We cannot always tell what is the "voice" of a man's prayer, especially when that prayer is full of moans, tears, sobs and sighs, but God hears a peculiar "voice" in every true supplication. If there were a houseful of children and they were all to cry, yet a mother would distinguish her baby's supplication from all the other cries. And when she went to the child, she would find out what the little one wanted. You and I would not know, perhaps, but she does. "Poor darling," she says, and she puts herself into such sympathy and union with her baby that she soon discovers the child's needs. What the baby cannot express, the mother can hear and discern. And when you cannot pray as you would, God can hear the voice of your supplications just as if you had said what you wanted to say. He takes the meaning out of our hearts, for our thoughts are like words to God. Remember that to speak into a man's ear, you must make a sound, otherwise he cannot distinguish your voice, but in God's ear there need be no sound whatever, for He can hear the voice of your tears, the voice of your silent supplication—

"To Him there's music in a groan,
And beauty in a tear."

Is it not a blessed thing that God understands the meaning of our prayers? "Hear the voice of my supplications."

We also learn that David's prayers were meant for God.' 'I said unto Jehovah, You are my God. Hear the voice of my supplications, OJehovah"Some men's prayers are meant for themselves—just to quiet their consciences. Other men's prayers are meant for their friends, that they may see what pious people they are. But the true suppliant's prayer is meant for God! When he addresses the envelope that contains his supplications, he addresses it to the God of Heaven, for the prayer is meant for Him.

And, once more, David's prayers were of such a kind that he could not rest unless he had the Lord's attention. This was his great cry, "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Je-

hovah." He could not bear to hear his own voice unless God heard that voice. I urge every troubled child of God to go straight to his own God and cry unto Him. You thought of going down the street and calling on Mrs. So-and-So, and telling her your sorrow. Yes, very well, you may do so if you like. But it is a shorter road to go to God with your trouble. Straightforward makes the best runner and there is no door that has such an inviting knocker, and that opens so easily, as the door of God! Go to the Lord with your trouble. Ask Him to hear you, for assuredly He will.

So much, then, on that second point. We have spoken of possession asserted and a petition presented.

III. Now, very briefly, David, to encourage himself, mentions PRESERVATION EXPERIENCED. "O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle." As much as to say, "You have done this for me before. Will You not do the same again? As You have begun with me, do not leave off with me till You have taken me to the country where there are no more battles—and where my head shall be covered with a crown of glory— and need not be covered with a helmet to ward off the enemy's sword."

You remember that when David went out to meet Goliath, two warriors came towards him, for Goliath came out with his armor-bearer—"the man that bore the shield went before him." Poor little David! He had no armor-bearer, had he? Saul had offered him armor that he might wear in the fight, but it did not fit him. He had never tried and proved such a protection as that, so he laid it aside. But was David without armor? No! The Hebrew of our text runs, "You have covered my head in the day of armor." That is to say, God had been David's Armor-Bearer. The Lord had borne a shield before him. Instead of the harness in which warriors put their confidence, God had covered David with a coat of mail through which no sword of the enemy could possibly cut its way! Has it not been so with us in days past? Have we not had our heads covered when God held His shield above us? Have we not been guarded from all hurt by the Providence and by the Grace of the Most High? I know it is so! Well, then, the God who delivered us out of the jaws of the lion and the claws of the bear will deliver us from the uncircumcised Philistine! And the God that in our youth taught our hands to war and our fingers to fight, so that the bow of steel was broken by our arms, will not leave us and forsake us now that we have grown older and feebler—but even to the end will He preserve and protect us! Therefore, let us be of good cheer and let our past experience encourage us to trust in the Lord.

"You have covered my head in the day of battle," said David; that is, God had guarded his most vital part' 'Lord, I have a cut or two here and there. I have scars upon my right arm and my foot has been injured, but, 'You have covered my head.' The adversaries could not give me such a blow as would lay bare my brain and spill my soul upon the field, for 'You have covered my head.'" Flesh wounds there may be, and deep bleeding gashes that cause

pain and sickness of heart, but the essential part has been guarded and we may rest contented that it shall be protected unto the end!

Moreover, David adds here that God had been the strength of his salvation. The power that had saved him had been God's power and it is so with all of us who have been brought into the way of life. Some of us came to Christ long ago, yet still we sing—

"Many days have passed since then, Many dangers I have seen. Yet have been upheld till now— Who could hold me up but You?"

Now, if the Lord had meant to destroy us, would He have done so much for us as He has done? I feel, when I think of some of my present troubles, very much like Admiral Drake who had sailed round the world and, here and there fought the Spaniards on the great ocean. And when he came back to the Thames, it blew a gale and his ship was likely to be driven ashore. He said, "No, no, no! We have not gone round the world and now come home to be drowned in a ditch!" So let us say, "No, no, no! We have not experienced so much of the goodness of God to be drowned in a paltry ditch like this." So let us still rejoice in the God who has preserved us until now and who will preserve us until the day of Jesus Christ!

IV. But I must hasten on to notice the fourth thing in our text, that is, PROTECTION EXPECTED. "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor."

If a man is oppressed, if he is slandered, if he is evilly spoken of, let him say to himself, "God will see to this. He is the Judge of all the earth and shall not He do right?" Do not meddle with the case yourself. Leave it in the Lord's hands. Our proverb says, "If you want a thing done well, do it yourself," but, if it is anything which has to do with your own character, let me tell you that this is the worst proverb that ever was invented! If you want a blot that you have made, or that somebody else has made, multiplied into two, try and rub it out with your finger while it is wet. But if you are wise, you will leave it alone. All the dirt that ever comes on a man's coat will brush off when it is dry. I do believe that, sometimes, holy characters shine all the brighter because they have been tarnished for a while by the filth cast upon them by ungodly men. If men cast mud at you, leave it alone. "But," says one, "this slander affects my character." Oh, yes, I know, but who are you that your character should not be assailed? "But it is the only one I have," you say. Well, that is quite right—and mind that you do not get another and a worse one—by making a fool of yourself! Leave it alone and be wise! The God who gave you the Grace to have a good character will take care of what He has given you and you need not be afraid, for God is a righteous Judge.

Moreover, beside that, God is a compassionate Friend. And when He sees any of His dear saints very poor and afflicted, do you not think that when they cannot take care of themselves, He will take care of them? David thought so, for he said, "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor."The rich man can take care of his own rights, but the poor man cannot—so God will take care that the poor man

shall not lose his rights, or if he does, God will avenge him of his adversary. Trust your cause with God! You can not have a better Advocate or a better Helper. Put not forth your hand unto unrighteousness, neither speak you on your own behalf. You will be wise if you will do as your Master did, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again." Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth.

V. Now, lastly, here is PRAISE PREDICTED. "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name."

They are down in the dumps today. They are troubled and burdened, despised and made to cry. But, says David, "Surely they shall give thanks unto Your name." Praise is assured by gratitude. There shall come a day when their gratitude shall be so great that they shall be obliged to give thanks unto God on account of all that He has done for them. "Surely" they shall. God will so astound them by His delivering mercy that they shall be compelled to speak up and to speak out—and give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

Yes, and they shall do more than that, for they shall not only express their thanks, but they shall praise God by their holy confidence. 'The upright shall dwell in Your Presence." They shall be drawn nearer to God and be peaceful, happy, quiet and at ease. This is a beautiful and comforting promise—"The upright shall dwell in Your Presence." All the world is up in arms against them and there is a great uproar. And what do they say? "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life: and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." One of the grandest ways of praising God is not by singing Psalms and hymns—that is a very sweet way of praising Him—but a grander way is by being quite calm in the time of trouble, quite happy in the hour of distress, just dwelling with God and finding all your grief relieved in His blessed Presence. How really and truly a child praises his father when he just bears anything from him! "It must be right," he says, "for my father does it." And I believe when a child of God says, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him," he is praising God more than he could ever do with the cornet or the high-sounding cymbals! Let us try to do that.

And, once more, we can equally praise God by abiding in fellowship with Him.' 'The upright shall sit in Your Presence." So it may be rendered. How can I explain it? If you could look within the veil up yonder, in the Glory Land, you would see a Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God, and round about Him all those redeemed by blood who have entered into their happiness. And you down here, in your time of trouble, can just go to your Father's table and take your seat as one of His children, or go to your dear Savior's feet and take your place with Mary—and so you will be praising the Lord Jesus Christ in the most effectual manner! I know that your temptation will be to be buzzing about the kitchen with Martha, fretting and worrying over what has happened and what has not happened—but all that the Lord Jesus Christ will say to you will be, "Martha, Martha, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered

about many things." I know men who ought to be called Martha, for they are as much cumbered as ever the women are and just as ready to fret and to worry, so that the Savior might say to them, "You are cumbered about many things, but if you want to praise Me, come and sit here. Come and learn of Me, for that is the good part which shall not be taken away from you. Come and listen to Me. Give up your whole heart to drinking in My Word and I will bless you. You come and mind My business and I will stay and mind your business. Come and try Me, and I will give you proof that trusting in Me is the safest and best way of living in this world."

All this I have spoken to the people of God. I would you were all such, but, if you are not, I pray the Lord to bring you into the bonds of the Covenant. It is a very blessed thing to come to Christ and, when you do come to Him, all these precious things are yours! Trust in what Christ has done for sinners. Trust in the promise of the faithful God to save all who believe in Jesus! And when you have trusted, you shall never be confounded, sinner though you are. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALMS 140 and 141.

Psalm 140. To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David. Very likely this Psalm was written by David while he was being hunted about by Saul, and while all manner of falsehoods were being spoken against him. He therefore comforts himself in his God. He writes this Psalm and he means to have it sung, and sung well, so he dedicates it "to the chief Musician." There are some parts of our life which are so crowded with urgent necessity and so full of Divine mercy that we feel that if we ever get through them, we will make a song about our deliverance and dedicate that song unto God through "the chief Musician."

Verse 1. Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man. He is wicked at heart and violent in his temper. Whenever we meet with such an adversary, we have good reason to cry to God, "Deliver me: preserve me." Yet, if we must have enemies, we prefer that they should be bad men. We do not wish to have a child of God against us. If we must have an antagonist, we would much rather that he should be one who is "evil" and "violent."

2. Which imagine mischief in their hearts continually are they gathered together for war I t goes hard with a peace-loving man—a man of quiet spirit—when he is beset by those whose very hearts are set on mischief and who cannot meet one another without conspiring to prepare for some fresh form of battle.

3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders 'poison is under their lips. Selah. Before a serpent strikes any object, its tongue is in quick motion. If you ever see a cobra when he is angry, you will notice that his tongue darts to and fro, as if impatient to sting. And the Psalmist, here, writing of the tongue of the ungodly, remarks how quickly it moves. They seem to have sharpened it—to have prepared it for all manner of mischief. "Adders' poison"—the poison of the deadliest known serpent in the East—"is under their

lips." Perhaps you think that this is a very dreadful description of some remarkably bad man. So it is, but remember that when Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, wishes to describe us all, both Jews and Gentiles, he quotes this very passage and says, "The poison of asps is under their lips." There is still poison in our mouths unless Grace has taken it away. We, too, shall soon be speaking evil and talking slanderously, if the Grace of God does not keep our tongues and our lips.

4. 5. Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;preserve me from the violent man who has planned to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me.' 'They have put it where I cannot see it. I do not know where it is, nor what it is, but I know that they want to lead me into such sin that they can afterwards turn round upon me and accuse me for it. 'The proud have hid a snare for me.'"

5. And cords; they have spread a net by the wayside. ' 'Close to where I am walking, so that if I go even an inch out of the way, I shall be caught in it. They seem to be tempting me in my usual course of life. 'They have spread a net by the wayside.'"

5. They have set traps for me. Selah. As men try to ensnare poor birds in all kinds of traps, so the ungodly sometimes seek the destruction of the righteous by setting many snares for them.

6. I said unto the LORD, You are my God. Ah, that was the right thing to do—to leave the ungodly and their traps and go straight to God. "I said unto the Lord, You are my God."

6, 7. Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle."When the darts flew thick and fast, and when the battleaxe came down with a mighty crash, 'You have covered my head in the day of battle.'" This Psalm reminds me of that passage in the song of Deborah and Barak—"O my Soul, you have trodden down strength." What wonders we also have been enabled to do by the upholding and preserving Grace of God!

8. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not their wicked devices lest they exalt themselves. Selah. If it seemed that God's Providence was helping them against the righteous, they would be too proud to be borne with— they would lift up their heads on high, and say, "See how God is with us, how He permits us to have our way?"

9. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. This may be read as a prophecy in the future tense—"The mischief of their own lips shall cover them."

10. Let burning coals fall upon them. Or, "Burning coals shall fall upon them."

10. Let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. The Psalmist doubtless had before his mind's eye the picture of Sodom, where burning coals fell on the guilty cities, and where men stumbled into the fire and when they tried to escape, fell into the deep slime pits and perished. And, truly, it is but just that, if men lie and slander—and

try to tempt the righteous to their destruction—they should fall into the pits that they have themselves dug.

11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth. Neither shall he be! The man who is glib of tongue and who uses that facility of speech for the destruction of the characters of godly men shall never be established.

11. Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. His own dogs shall eat him. He was a huntsman against the righteous and, behold, the evil of his own mouth shall turn upon him to devour him! "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him."

12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. We may always leave such matters with the Lord. God is the poor man's Executor and the proud man's Executioner! He will take care of the oppressed and such as are down-trodden.

13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your Presence. Now let us read the next Psalm, which is to much the same effect.

Psalm 141:1. LORD, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You. You see how a child of God prays when he is in trouble. David says, "I cry unto You," and then the second time, "I cry unto You." And he cried forGod as well as to Him. "Make haste unto me." The very best thing you can do, when you cannot help yourself, is to cry unto God, for He will help you.

2. Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. David was probably far away from the Tabernacle and he could not join in presenting the morning or the evening sacrifice there. But he prayed God to let his prayer be such a sacrifice—"Let it be sweet as the perfume of the smoking spices of the morning; let it be as acceptable as the burning lamb of eventide."

3. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Our mouth is a door and it needs a watchman, and there is no watchman who can keep it except God, Himself. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

4. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties. That last petition is a very proper one. We are neither to think the thoughts of the wicked, nor to practice their ways, nor to enjoy their pleasures. "Let me not eat of their dainties." There are certain amusements which are fraught with sin—"Let me not eat of their dainties." There are some erroneous doctrines which are very pleasant to the taste of those who believe them—"Let me not eat of their dainties." There are some sins that seem to have a peculiarly sweet flavor and so are very attractive to men—"Let me not eat of their dainties."

5. Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness. You see, dear Friends, David cries out against slander. He cannot bear that wicked men should lie against his character, but he says, "I do not want to be left alone where I am in the wrong. I do not wish to be flattered.

'Let the righteous smite me.' He is the man who ought to do it. When I have done wrong, it is his duty to correct me, and I wish him to do it. 'Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.'"

5. And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head. Some people cannot bear to be spoken to about a fault. They feel as if the reprover had broken their head, directly, and they are as savage as a bear with a sore head! But the child of God is not so—he looks upon the rebuke of a good man as being like healing, sweet-smelling oil—and he prizes it. Depend upon it, the man who will tell you your faults is your best friend! It may not be a pleasant thing for him to do it and he knows that he is running the risk of losing your friendship—but he is a true and sincere friend—therefore thank him for his reproof and learn how you may improve by what he tells you.

5. For yet my prayer, also, shall be in their calamities. I will try to repay the righteous for their rebukes by praying for them when they are in trouble. I will say to my God, "These good men tried to keep me right and they smote me when I did wrong. Now, Lord, they are in trouble, I pray You to help them and bring them out of it."

6. When their judges are overthrown in stonyplaces, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet Wicked men often will not hear the Gospel, but when they get into trouble, they will. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, then they begin to be willing to hear what good men have to say. A bitter world makes a sweet word and when Providence frowns upon us, it often happens that we love the Gospel all the more, and smile upon its messengers, for their words are sweet.

7. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth. "We are like men ready to be put into their graves, or the cause that we advocate seems so totally dead that we seem to be like dry bones that are flung out of a grave."

7. As when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth. "We feel as if we were like chips out of a tree that has been cut down."

8. But my eyes are on You, O God the Lord: in You is my trust "I may be cut to pieces, I may be chopped up, I may seem to be made into a bundle of firewood, but, Lord, my eyes are on You. 'O God the Lord: in You is my trust.'"

8. Leave not my soul destitute. "If I have You, I am still rich. Even if I lie at the grave's mouth, I may still live. But if You are gone from me, then am I destitute, indeed."

9, 10. Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape. Amen! So let it be!